

The annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission is getting underway in Santiago, with pro- and anti-whaling countries pledging to work together in a spirit of compromise. But as our environment correspondent Richard Black reports, divisions remain as wide as ever:

Anti-whaling countries have been trying **to browbeat** Japan into **dropping** its whaling programmes for more than 20 years and it hasn't really worked. So now some, led by the US, are trying a new approach of engagement - looking for common interests where they exist, and seeking constructive solutions where they don't.

The end result could be a future deal where some **commercial whaling** is permitted **in return for** Japan **dropping** its Antarctic scientific hunt. Some anti-whaling governments **have deep reservations about** the new strategy. But **conservation groups** are divided. Some believe it's worth **pursuing a compromise** that could result in fewer whales being killed each year, whereas others argue that a total global ban is the only goal worth fighting for.

When the meeting opens, Chile's president Michelle Bachelet **is due to** announce the establishment of **a whale sanctuary** along the country's coast, and the wider Latin American group of countries wants a sanctuary throughout the entire south Atlantic. Pro-hunting nations have historically **opposed** the creation of whale sanctuaries; and the new mood of peace here may not survive the introduction of these key issues.

Richard Black, BBC News, Santiago

Vocabulary and definitions

to browbeat	to try to force someone to do something by threatening them or using strong, often unfair persuasion
dropping	no longer doing something; stopping
commercial whaling	hunting and processing whales with the purpose of selling their meat
in return for	provided; as an exchange for
have deep reservations about	seriously doubt
conservation groups	here, anti-whaling organisations
pursuing a compromise	seeking an agreement (in an argument) in which the people involved reduce their demands or change their opinion in order to agree
is due to	is expected to
a whale sanctuary	a place where whales can live and be protected from hunters and dangerous conditions
opposed	been against

More on this story: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/7468496.stm>

Read and listen to the story and the vocabulary online:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newsenglish/witn/2008/06/080623_whaling.shtml